

# The "Darkest Continent" in Our Own United States, Told by Miss O'Reilly

Did You Know That, Within an Hour of the New World's Biggest City, Divorces Sell for a Quarter; That Men Swap Wives, with a Pint of Rum to Boot; That Stepbrothers Marry Stepsisters; That Nine-tenths of Grown People Are But Little Children; That in a Clan of 200 Only 13 Are Normal?

MARY BOYLE O'REILLY VISITS PINEY DISTRICT AND REPORTS AMAZING CONDITIONS.



A TYPICAL PINEY FAMILY. THE FATHER CANNOT READ OR WRITE. THE CHILDREN ARE ALL FEEBLE-MINDED. THE MOTHER HAD GONE TO TOWN TO BEG WHEN THE PHOTOGRAPH WAS MADE.

BY MARY BOYLE O'REILLY.

TRENTON, N. J., Sept. 2.—"Why do the good, civilized folk of America ignore a countryside peopled with adults who are mentally children, strong, self-willed men and women of native stock who are without reason, judgment or self control?"

Miss Elizabeth Kite, state agent for the New Jersey school for feeble minded, put the question with a finality that accused. "You doubt the possibility? Then come with me to the Pines. You will find the district a plague spot of moral contagion—a feeder for our jails, almshouses and hospitals."

Next morning found us motoring through a lonely tract of 2,000 square miles between the barren coast of Long Beach and the fertile Delaware valley. This area of scrub, cranberry bogs and salt marsh is peopled with families of degenerates.

The present-day inhabitants are entirely native stock. Two of the Piney families go back to Quaker days and boast William Penn's name on still typical imbeciles "husband" and "wife" direct descendants of the first governor of New Jersey.

Of churches there are none, nor any organized moral influence. Schools are few and far between. The dispensers of law are local squires confessedly ignorant of law, but maintaining more or less successfully, according to their own rectitude, a semblance of order.

"The people of the Pines have away of their own," says Squire Joyce, a justice of the peace for 30 years. "They are human beings, but not domesticated." "Not domesticated" is good.

About these shacks forgothier typical Piney women, perfectly healthy but startlingly repellent, low-browed, barefooted women with hoarse voices, rotting teeth, tousled hair and tattered clothing, women lazy, childish, unique in manners and morals.

## Luigi, the Brick Cleaner, is Heralded as a Second Caruso, But His Wife is Sorry, She Fears, "Those Fine Ladies."

BY MARY BOYLE O'REILLY.

Staff Correspondence.

PHILADELPHIA, Sept. 2.—Luigi Gasparini, a middle-aged Italian brick cleaner, is believed to be an embryo Caruso. Speaking English with difficulty, ignorant of the art of music, his impromptu rendering of "Il Trovatore" caused Oscar Hammerstein to summon the unconscious tenor from his brick pile.

"Report to my chorusmaster," commanded the impresario. "He will fix you all right."

"Si-si, signor, but what about my 20 cents an hour for cleana da bricks?" demanded the thrifty singer.

"Those too quick changes, they are not good, no," explained Signora Louisa Gasparini as one who looks in to the face of fear.

Anxiety and the pallor of a home-bound woman had refined her intelligent face. The crowded room in which we sat was scrupulously clean. A basket of home-made cake and a straw-covered flask of chianti on the table proved the house mother's spirit of hospitality.

"Signorina, those too quick changes, they are dangerous, yes. Me, I feel it—here." One work-worn hand clenched against her breast. "We are not so poor as some. We have our health, our four children, our home and—anc—I fear. Why? Ah, it is hard to say. With a woman to feel is to know. My husband and me, we are of Parma—in Italia. You know that Parma, perhaps? Always from a boy my husband sing—sing—'Rusticana,' 'Il Trovatore,' 'Lucia.' Everybody know it is his joy to sing on the piazza—in the cantina—at the wedding. When he was but a young man, just himself, alone, it is not so bad. No. But after he is married, ah, then it is different. To sing is to waste one's time—to lose mooch money. I beg, but it is no good. Always Luigi

Ignorance and neglect have made these women moral outlaws. Few among them ever heard of the commandments, nine in ten are so feeble in mind that they live disorderly lives, with no intention of wrong doing.

"No, I ain't never had no learning," says Lil, the imbecile mother of ten children. "I can count if you give me time. But I ain't never had nobody to keep fur me, an' I had to keep fur myself as best I could."

"I ain't so stupid as you'd think," pleads Bertha, a normal-looking woman who cannot draw the outline of a square from a copy on the table.

"No, I never went to no school," says Ford, who at 30 has the mind of a child of nine and knows neither the date, the season nor the names of the months.

May, his childish "wife," tosses her head, "dear me, that's nothing; half the world can't read and write," she protests.

Ford, vigorous and boyish looking, "married" May "by the squire," having secured from that worthy for 25 cents a writin' of separation from two previous wives. Such writin's are considered handy to show in case of trouble. The magistrate knew, none better, that getting a divorce proves a perplexing formality when both parties to the contract have other husbands and wives. For instance:

Ford's brother Jim a graduate of three states prisons, deserted his idiot wife to "marry" the imbecile Clarissa who had three husbands. Later Jim traded Clarissa to Lem Oldman for \$1.50 and a quart of crude rum.

Later still Jim secured another "wife," Louisa, by a similar trade with her "husband." "I tell you I wasn't mad, I wasn't," says poor simple Louisa, whose mind is but eight years old, although she has four living husbands. "You see, Pete worked right agin me, an' his folks done dirt on me carting every news, so I haint got no more patience. Then, too, Jim is marm's sister's son."

Consider the intermarried Dixon-Osborn clan, 199 individuals, of whom 13 are normal, 124 degenerate, 20 illegitimate and 22 criminal, living on the outskirts of a country town.

Imbecile Betie married defective Zacher and became the mother of nine feeble-minded children, 12 feeble-minded great-grandchildren. Of these, one died in infancy, eight lived in public institutions, no one knows how many went to jail. One granddaughter, Mag, bore eight illegitimate children. In three generations 28 illegitimates, 29 in public institutions, 55 noticeably defective males, 50 noticeably defective females and two normal individuals out of 105 descendants.

No one seems to care.

Let it be remembered that this communal condition spreads a contagion of evil about unnumbered New Jersey towns. The nomads who drift to the woods, the women running the roads, are solid against every one not of their lawless tribe.

Their children, strong in body but feeble in mind, survive by chance, not care. "No, my kids ain't baptised," confesses Stumpy Sal, the well-meaning, mentally eight-year-old mother of six, "but I had them insured. You can't never tell what'll come on children. I lost two in eight months. They cost me a hurray of a lot of money. Goin' some, wasn't it? Lucky I know how yo' cure 'em of croup and asthma. How do I do it? I ain't telling you nothing. First you stand the child up by a door and measure off the top of its head. Then dig a hole in the jam, put in some hair from the child's crown, an' plug up the hole with bread dough. When that child grows taller than the hole it won't have no more asthma."

"Aunt Lil" was a little girl of 12 when her first baby was born. So was imbecile Louise. So, think of the awful pity of it, were a score of women in the sand holes.

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notice. Then comes more barmint. After a time I see how Luigi forget himself for those small ones, working so hard, saving money, thinking out for tomorrow.

"Then we come here—to New York—looking for riches. Luigi has put in the banka one thousand lire (\$200). We two, we talk together how that is ver' mooch money. Pretty soon our children can have everything, everything."

"So I open a store. You see it. Not ver' big, no. Just macaroni, cakes, oil an' like that—cheap, all for cash. The neighbors say always I have one ver' good store. I laugh, but it pays the rent. So the children they go to school, every one, all four. Never will they talk dago. They are Americans. And Luigi, he have steady work cleaning the bricks. All day he can sit down in the sun and the pay is one lira the hour—how you say 20 cents? When it is night he come home, wash up, eat his supper. Me, I tell him about that ver' small store. Sometimes he sing to me. Then we talk—talk of the children. Ah, Signorina, but we are happy—more happy even than in Italia. Sometimes my heart tell me it cannot last. Women are like that."

"Then—then my Luigi goes to work by the new opera house. From the first he is different—restless. The theater makes him remember how he wanted to be a singer. So he is sorry that he work for us all the years. 'See, my life, it is wasted,' he tell me—just like that. It is the next day that impresario heard Luigi singing. 'Gasparini,' the signor say, 'stop work. Think for yourself. Be a singer. Pretty soon you will be rich—famous—your life will be worth living—all the world will know Luigi Gasparini—the belle donne (the fine ladies) will call 'Bravissimo' when you sing.'"

"And Luigi?"

"Ah, Signorina, in a day he forget all those happy years. Me, the children, he no think for us the same as before. It is himself alone that counts. He no wants work, he no care for that little shop. My heart tells me how, pretty soon, he no remember our home at all. What good for Luigi to sing in that new opera house if he is willing to leave me and the children—if he forgets to love us any more?"

TOOK COPPER FOR ROBBER.

SACRAMENTO, Cal., Sept. 2.—Motorcycle Policeman Brown of this city chased a couple on another motorcycle for ten miles. When Brown overhauled the fleeing men the man pulled out a pad and wrote:

We are deaf and thought you were a robber.

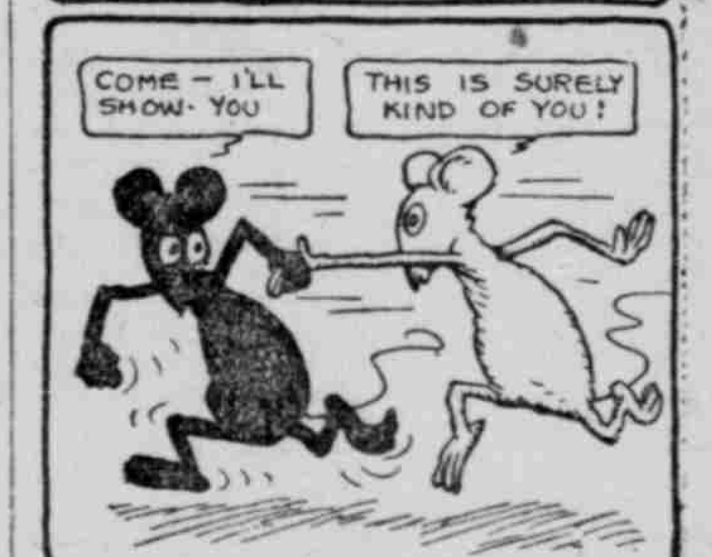
SHOES OF IRISH LACE.

TO GO WITH X-RAY SKIRTS. LONDON, Sept. 2.—X-ray skirts are to be accompanied by X-ray shoes according to the latest glimpse of coming feminine fashions. The uppers of the new wear are made of Irish lace.

KILLS TUBERCULOSIS GERMS.

PITTSBURGH, Pa., Sept. 2.—This city's low death rate from consumption is due to the preventive effects of sulphur in the heavy smoke from the mills here, according to Dr. John A. Hawkins, tuberculosis expert.

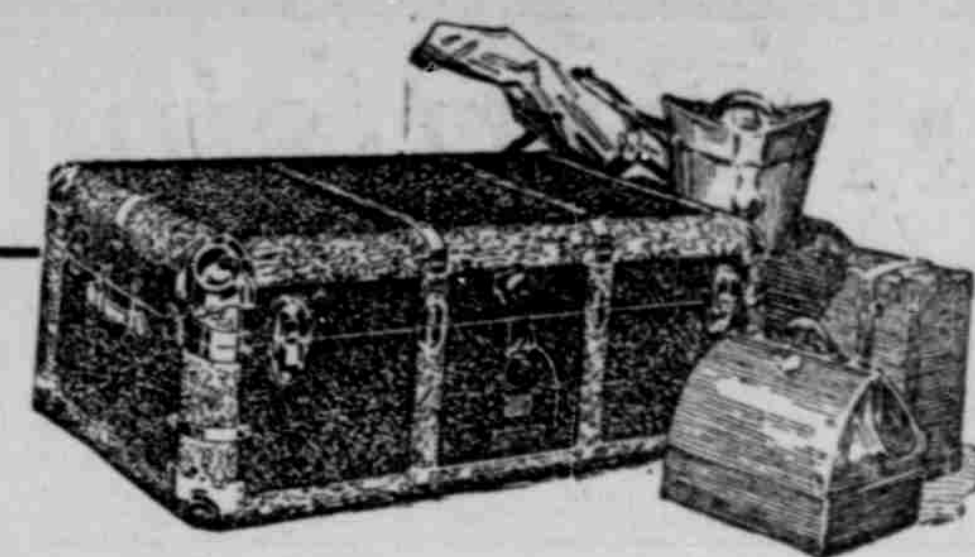
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